

Araei House stands among Isfahan's best-preserved historic homes

Iranica Desk

Araei House, one of the notable residences in the Khan Houses Complex in Khorasgan and one of the few historic houses in Isfahan Province whose foundations, main structure and architectural details have been exceptionally well preserved, offers visitors a rare and complete example of a traditional Iranian house.

Seyyed Rouhollah Seydaldasgari, deputy head of the Cultural Heritage Department at the Isfahan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, told IRNA that Araei House is considered one of the province's prominent historic residences because of its architectural decorations and the extent to which its original character has been preserved.

He said the house's most important feature is the near-complete preservation of the original foundation and the various com-

ponents of a traditional Iranian home.

"The number of historic houses in the province in which the entire structure and architectural details have survived without extensive alterations is very limited and may not even exceed the fingers of one hand," he said.

"Araei House therefore has considerable historical value from this perspective." He explained that in many historic houses, only parts such as the Shahneshin, or main reception room, have survived, while the courtyard, kitchen and other key spaces have disappeared over time. At Araei House, however, the overall structure remains intact, allowing visitors to see the different elements of a traditional Iranian house together.

Referring to the preservation of historic features inside the house, Seydaldasgari noted that several jars dating back centuries still remain in the kitchen. The survival of such



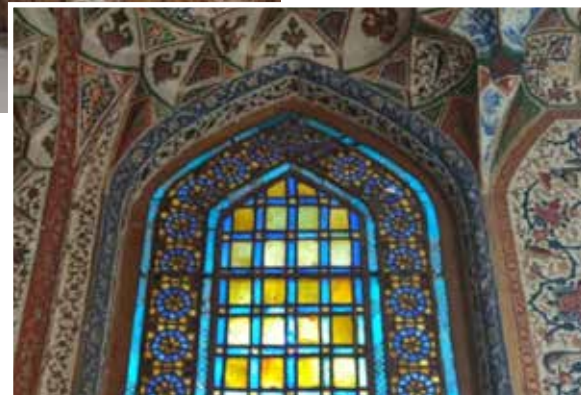
elements alongside the original structure further enhances the house's historical significance.

Regarding the documentation and national registration of Araei House, he said the owners had been reluctant in previous decades to allow government institutions to enter the property and conduct expert assessments. The Cultural Heritage Department therefore pursued the matter through

the judicial system.

Once access was secured, surveying and documentation were carried out, while photographs and videos were taken of different parts of the house to prepare the necessary records for its protection and national registration.

Seydaldasgari said the house was eventually added to Iran's National Heritage List. Its registration allows conservation and



protective measures to be implemented and makes the property eligible for Cultural Heritage Department support and financial

assistance for preservation. He said Araei House could have been identified and registered decades ago during assessments of historic residences and may even have been overlooked in surveys conducted during the Pahlavi era.

"This building genuinely ranks among the first-class historic houses of Isfahan," he said, adding that its registration could pave

the way for more effective protection of the valuable property. Seydaldasgari also highlighted the role of the owners' family in preserving the house. Although the owners had not wanted official institutions to enter the property in previous years, he said the family itself had played an important role in safeguarding the building.

The family lived in the house, and the family's grandmother, who died last year, had also lived there. The family preserved their ancestral home to a considerable extent, he said.

Khan Houses Complex in Khorasgan, Isfahan, is located in a historic area which was once home to the local headmen and their relatives, and more than 10 historic houses from the complex remain today. Araei House, dating to the Zand and Qajar periods, was recently added to Iran's National Heritage List along with the Kamarzarrin site in Isfahan, the underground city of Kord-e Olya in Tiran and Karvan, the Badafshan archaeological site in Badroud, and the Adineh Mosque in Dastگرد.

Pirgol Mud Volcano combines geological wonders with tourism potential

Iranica Desk

Sistan and Baluchestan Province, a land rich in geological wonders and pristine natural landscapes, has long attracted nature lovers and researchers. Among its natural phenomena, mud volcanoes stand out not only as rare geomorphological features but also as valuable assets for sustainable development and the expansion of health tourism.

Located southwest of Khash, the Pirgol Mud Volcano is a rare geological phenomenon with significant natural, therapeutic and tourism potential. Despite its distinctive features, the site remains relatively unknown. Developing basic infrastructure, promoting the attraction more widely and preparing a comprehensive plan to harness its health tourism potential could turn the area into a major ecotourism destination in southeastern Iran, according to IRNA. Among Sistan and Baluchestan Province's natural attractions, some remain overlooked and largely unknown. Such sites possess not only geological value but also the potential to drive economic growth, create local jobs and promote sustainable development in less-developed areas. Pirgol Mud Volcano in Khash is one such natural asset. The formation resembles a small mud volcano and rises amid the Siahband Mountains east of Bazman and southwest of Khash.

The discharge of mud, water and gas from its numerous vents offers a distinctive display of the region's geological and environmental features.

Located near Mount Taftan, pristine mountainous areas, designated tourism villages and the region's cultural and



IRNA

social attractions, Pirgol could become a focal point in Khash's tourism network. This is particularly significant as health tourism has gained growing global popularity in recent years and is considered one of the driving sectors of the tourism industry. Mud therapy has long been practiced in different societies as a traditional way of using minerals found in mud. Many enthusiasts of nature-based therapies choose destinations with mineral-rich mud and natural springs. This makes scientific studies, proper management and the development of sustainable infrastructure at Pirgol all the more important. Dadshah Qalandarzahi, a resident of Khash, said Pirgol Mud Volcano is one of the region's valuable attractions and that local people have known about it for generations and attached particular importance to it.

He added that with broader promotion and proper planning, the natural attraction could draw many tourists to the area and create opportunities for economic activity among local residents.

The Khash resident noted that many areas with natural attrac-



tions have become leading tourism destinations through proper attention and investment, adding that Pirgol has similar potential.

Qalandarzahi stressed that greater government attention, proper promotion of the attraction and efforts to attract health tourists could facilitate the area's development and create new opportunities for local residents.

Nader Ebrahimi, a resident of the Karvandar Rural District of Khash, also emphasized the importance of introducing the area's natural attractions, saying Pirgol is among the sites that have yet to be properly intro-

duced to target audiences and people across the country.

He added that, beyond its environmental and geological value, the natural phenomenon could also be developed as a health tourism attraction and help attract visitors interested in nature and traditional therapies. The local activist said developing tourism in rural and less-developed areas could create direct employment while boosting handicrafts, local services and household incomes.

Ebrahimi said promoting Pirgol requires planning, effective advertising, visitor amenities and safe conditions for tourists so that the natural asset can be used in a sustainable and effective manner.

Head of Khash Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Malek-Masoud Rigi said that Pirgol is one of Sistan and Baluchestan's lesser-known geomorphological phenomena and a valuable natural attraction of the province. He said the mud volcano has formed in the shape of a small mud cone. The discharge of water and mud from elevated ar-

reas and multiple vents has given the site a special place among local people, some of whom consider it sacred.

He added that because of traditional beliefs and faith in the therapeutic properties of the mud, local people have long visited the area to treat certain skin conditions and other physical ailments by covering their bodies with the mud.

Rigi said Pirgol has numerous active and dormant vents. The presence of old cones and the release of gas and mud through various cracks indicate ongoing geological processes in the area. He noted that, in addition to their tourism value, mud volcanoes provide important information about the Earth's internal structure, tectonic activity and possible underground resources, making them scientifically significant as well.

Rigi stressed that turning this natural asset into a health tourism destination requires



suitable access roads, service facilities, information signs, designated safe areas for visitors and scientific studies.

The governor of Gohar-Kuh District of Taftan, Ebrahim Rigi, said Pirgol mud volcano is one of the prominent tourism attractions of Taftan and, alongside Mount Taftan, is among the area's most important natural

assets.

He added that just as Mount Taftan is regarded as the district's natural symbol because of its grandeur, Pirgol also has the potential to become an important tourism destination because of its distinctive geological and natural characteristics. According to Rigi, some measures have been taken in recent years to provide electricity and establish basic infrastructure in the area, but these efforts are not sufficient to create suitable conditions and attract the maximum number of visitors.

The district governor said improving access, providing visitor amenities, strengthening safety measures and planning for tourist visits are among the area's key needs.

He noted that promoting natural attractions such as Pirgol could not only expand tourism but also create jobs for young people and boost the local economy.

Experts say the presence of mud volcanoes is an indication of relatively young tectonic activity in the region, and studying them can provide researchers with valuable information about the Earth's structure. Although the amount of water discharged by Pirgol has declined in recent years due to prolonged drought, the phenomenon remains one of the notable natural attractions of Khash and southeastern Iran.

Harnessing Pirgol's potential now requires a development-oriented approach, cooperation among government agencies, participation by local communities and planning to link nature tourism with health tourism. Such efforts could help put Khash and Taftan more prominently on Iran's tourism map.